(c) A provision of Rs. 200 crores has been approved by the Government for the purpose of payment of statutory dues by way of Salary, Provident Fund, Gratuity etc. including VSS benefits.

Power to fix limits on professional tax to States and UTs

228. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to hand over the power to fix a limit on Professional tax to States and Union territories by amending the Constitution of India;

(b) whether any consensus in this regared was arrived at the conference of State Chief Ministers and Union Finance Minister held recently in New Delhi; and

(c) whether any decision was taken at the Centre-States level conference to reduce mounting States, deficit, reduction in non-plan expenditure and, if necessary, to take tough decisions to restore over-all stability of the country?

THE MINISTER TO STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAY KUMAR): (a) and (b) Discussion was held on this issue in the Conference of Chief Ministers held on 22.6.2000. A consensus emerged that the power to fix limit on professional tax should be given to the States by amending the Constitituon after proper discussions.

(c) No, Sir.

SC/ST quota in promotion of Customs and Excise, Inspectors

†229. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether SC/ST quota in the promotion of Inspectors in the Department of Customs and Excise has been filled;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether posts reserved for SC/ST have been filled up with persons from general category;

(d) whether Customs and Excise Board has issued any orders with a view to rectify this irregularity; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(e) if so, the officers responsible for violation of these orders and the action being taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAY KUMAR): (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Introduction of High Denomination Notes

230. SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to introduce Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 notes within next three months;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether high denomination notes are being introduced on account of counterfeit currencies;

(d) what are the names of firms who have designed these notes and whether any security features have been introduced for the new currencies so as to curb forgery; and

(e) the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAY KUMAR): (a) The Government have decided to introduce Rs. 500 (revised colour scheme) and Rs. 1,000 denomination notes. These notes are likely to be issued shortly.

(b) These notes will have additional security features for effectively checking the menace of counterfeiting.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) The design of the Rs. 1000 denomination bank note was finalised by the Technical Committee constituted by Government of India for identifying latest security features for incorporation in the Rs. 1000 denomination note, with the assistance of M/s. De La Rue Giori, Lausanne. The Rs. 1000 and Rs. 500 notes will contain additional security features such as anti-copier feature and the optically variable ink (OVI), i.e., colour shift feature. The Rs. 1000 note would also contain a magnetic windowed security thread.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.